

Call to Action Stop Talking and Listen

Case Studies from Cuyahoga Valley National Park

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Stop Talking and Listen

This action plan for Call to Actions, Action 13 “Stop Talking and Listen” is intended as a toolkit for building and sustaining mutually beneficial relationships with diverse communities

Description of Action 13 Stop Talking and Listen

The key element of this action involves a two-day community conversation in each location, followed by the development and implementation of a community/NPS action plan. In each location, the action plan will establish steps for the NPS and the community to work together toward shared objectives. The NPS Advisory Board relevancy committee will support the NPS efforts to design, facilitate, and follow-up on these conversations as a new approach to NPS community engagement in seven very different communities. The NPS will use the support of the NPS Advisory Board relevancy committee to select one location in each NPS Region, with the objective of reaching out to a mix of urban, rural, and tribal communities that currently have little engagement with the NPS. The seven sites will be selected carefully to ensure that geographic and demographic diversity is well represented. NPS staff from local national parks as well as historic preservation and community assistance programs will attend each in-depth conversation. Members of the NPS Advisory Board relevancy committee will assist in the organization and facilitation of each event.

Discussion during each of these conversations will include community interests and needs; NPS purposes, assets, and capacity; and the challenges and opportunities to connect citizens to the great outdoors and our collective history. The conversations will explore the opportunity for the community and the NPS to build new relationships, resulting in the preparation of a community/NPS plan to work together for mutual benefit at each location. NPS parks and programs will then work collaboratively with the community to initiate the steps identified in the action plan.

The learning that takes place in each citizen conversation will be captured by NPS staff and Advisory Board relevancy committee members. This information will then be aggregated and shared broadly throughout the NPS, with the support of the Relevancy Committee, to serve as a starting point for in-depth community conversations in new locations.

(<http://www.inside.nps.gov/calltoaction/action13.cfm>)

Washington, D.C. - The National Park Service (NPS) unveiled A Call to Action identifying four key themes and 36 actions to ready the agency for its 100th anniversary in 2016. The plan commits the agency to connecting people to parks, strengthening local economies and encouraging organizational innovation within the NPS.

The four key themes of A Call to Action are: (1) “Connecting People to Parks”; (2) “Advancing the Education Mission”; (3) “Preserving America’s Special Places”; and (4) “Enhancing Professional and Organizational Excellence.” NPS Director Jon Jarvis outlined the plan and a new emphasis on communications internally and with the agency’s key partners.

How it came to be

While all of the Call to Action items are important and will be applied in some manner, Action 13 “Stop Talking and Listen,” was designated by Director Jarvis as a focal point for Cuyahoga Valley National Park. In order for Action 13 to be successful; in-depth, ongoing conversations need to take place in the broad and varied culture that the park is located in. Work plans will be created and implemented at Cuyahoga Valley National Park, which will explore new approaches for building and sustaining mutually beneficial relationships with diverse communities.

The question we asked ourselves at Cuyahoga Valley National Park is how can we be a catalyst and lead by example to serve a broader cultural shift? Just as it took the wisdom and expertise of many people to inspire Stop Talking and Listen, the plan will require collective collaboration, innovation, and partnership to support and bring these ideas into fruition.

That being said, it is important to understand that the approach adopted by Cuyahoga Valley National Park may in its entirety not fit another park.



Case Study One

What We Did

This section will provide guidance for getting started with the process of engaging diverse communities. This document outlines what we did and the questions we asked. Because Cuyahoga Valley National Park was a pilot park for this process, preliminary conference calls took place on many occasions with the Relevancy Committee and the park's team members. These preliminary conversations set forth the motions for the events to come.

Essential Starting Process

- Survey park staff to determine existing assumptions between park and community engagement.
- Perform an assessment of who you think are key people in the community that should attend your meeting(s).
- Hold a community roundtable with the individuals you identified from your assessment. The outcome of this meeting will help you to gain and understand the feelings of the people in the community in which you are trying to engage.
- Set dates for your citizen conversations. Locations can be off site or in your park. Consider using a facilitator from the area accompanied by park staff.

To start the process Cuyahoga Valley National Park hosted a meeting to provide the opportunity for an open dialogue and discussion with a group of innovators, visionaries, and leaders from the Cleveland and Akron area with an interest in exploring how to strengthen the relationship with diverse communities and the park.

Morning Session What We Learned: Survey suggested that staff was split in regards to questions three and four. Question three stated: Do you feel the park staff adequately reflects the race, ethnicity, and culture of the surrounding communities? And question four stated: Do you feel that the stories the park interprets adequately reflect the race, ethnicity, and culture of the surrounding communities?

Comments in response to question of park staff diversity:

- Environmental education staff (in general not just our park) is predominately white and female.
- Jobs not being posted properly or broadly enough.
- Question raised as to how recruitment takes place; how are potential students made aware of offerings.

Comments in response to do you feel that the stories the park interprets adequately reflect the race, ethnicity, and culture of the surrounding communities?

- Some people may not want a story.
- How are we currently capturing stories?
- Define a story: participant mentioned that after 9/11 many came to the park to just sit in the quiet; another mentioned a little girl who question why the water ran over a rock like it did—are these stories?
- Are we engaging visitors to find out their needs?
- We are always inviting the same schools.
- There seems to be a community bubble in that people near the park don't want anyone else to come in they don't want visitation increased.
- There is a deep seated history within this area.
- The diversity of the park programs has to reflect the diversity of the people and their diverse needs.
- Relevancy to people.
- Capture the knowledge of others and then use it to grow and keep the park relevant.
- Reverse mentoring; young people have much to teach.
- Diversity is more than skin color etc.. it has just as much to do with how people do things; use of computers, reading etc.

Comments to the question that arose; “How open are we and what is done to support being open?”

- Do we embrace other traditions?
- Do we have the skills we need?
- Can the organization support it?
- The organization needs to be more open to “things” change, push the edge more. Find a way to make things happen.
- Do we really even know the communities?
- The history of the park is messy.
- Importance of sustainable relationships.
- Surface what’s real about Cuyahoga.
- Use of media to gain access.
- Do we understand the mission of the park?

Afternoon Session Addressed a Variety of Questions:

The group was asked who should be invited to March meeting.

- Community must be defined.
- 18 and younger group should be represented.
- Include immigrants (Asian, Russian; displaced Iraqis, Burma, populations etc.).
- Political representations (mayors, council, etc.).
- Businesses, corporations, healthcare system (CDC, ABIA) etc..
- Faith community leaders.
- Senior groups.
- All level educators (teachers, etc.).
- Join and tap into already existing groups.

Areas of concern.

- Poor advertising and park’s inability to advertise.
- Public not interested in what we are offering.
- Lack of built relationships with organizations.
- Why does Metro Park feel more like a community park?
- Inability to use rapid/social media; blogging, Facebook etc..
- The park lacks awareness in the general public.
- The NPS is the largest informal educator in the world – HOW CAN WE USE THAT!
- Making sure that the “idea” doesn’t fizzle out/become shelved.

Needs/concerns of the community.

- Lifestyle
- Health
- Life skills
- Education
- Transportation
- Job creation
- Access to healthy foods
- Social values
- Conservation awareness

Decisions to be made:

- We must design the experience.
- What type of facilitation should be used for March meeting – professional facilitators; park staff; etc.
- Have small table meeting then bring together?
- We must go to the people, take the park to them.
- Meeting must be framed properly and clearly.
- Broader understanding of where you are and what is around you.
- Access to healthy foods
- Social values
- Conservation awareness

What's next?

- Decide on how many days in March, when and where.
- Everyone attending afternoon is to submit five names of individuals with complete contact information (who they are, what they do, and why then should be invited).
- Should there be small table facilitation or larger scale?
- What type of venue would work best? (Tri-C offered space at any of their campuses).
- When you go back and re-think the day let us know what worked and what did not work.
- Determine the length of the event.
- Determine how you will promote the event.
- Decide what types of materials will be needed at the event.
- Create a list of jobs to be completed and assign tasks and deadlines.

Recap meeting with assessment team and CUVA planning team

- It is clear that we have an awareness and signage issue.
- Don't waste any more time on what we already know.
- What can we act on realistically?
- Identify all areas where people are finding information.
- Our materials are not conclusive.
- How do we prevent March meeting from being too general that we don't have specific ways to tackle it?
- Concern raised as to the number of people invited for March.
- Suggested that there be round table with a question posed to each.
- Build on youth and education.
- Suggested the morning sessions be with political types with breakfast and afternoons by with community leaders etc. Also suggested that there be a session in Cleveland and in Akron.
- Ideas for venues, recap of Tri-C offer, libraries, community centers.
- Important these meeting NOT take place in the park.
- If you elevate you must follow through.
- Include school systems?
- Include children and parents?
- Very important to frame these meeting in regards to what we want out of them.
- As an agency we want to become less egotistical and reach out.
- Thought must be given to the questions that will be asked.
- Literature and invites must be framed in a manner that is clear and understandable.
- Define a checklist complete with time frames to be used for future meetings; where held, how many, invitee's list, name tags, items needed, time frame to make happen, etc.
- Emphasis again made that staff should facilitate the discussions with community members.
- The TEAM set dates and planned to do four community events due to the complexity of the park.

- 1) *Cleveland Clinic - meeting goals*** – an opportunity to conduct focused discussion on park outreach with a diverse audience in a structured environment. We want to learn how the park can support the surrounding community. What should the park learn about citizens, what area assets they offer, and what are some of the challenges the community faces.

Cleveland Clinic staff attendees: Attendees were brought together from the director of diversity and community outreach and included a dynamic group of nine people

Meeting Outcome/Specific Question(s) Asked:

What do you see/feel as a community member?

- Lack of awareness that the park is here
- Staff would like to be involved with the park
- Staff would like to be Ambassadors for the park
- It is important to build trust in the community first – come to them let them get to know you
- It is important for people to feel welcome
- The music options in the park are of no interest – it is not diverse enough
- Transportation to the park is a major problem
- Marketing materials need to be bilingual and tailored to specific communities
- Create opportunities for groups to use the park
- Reach into the schools to create awareness
- Specific information on how the park can benefit someone in the health and wellness realm
- Offer a variety of programs that cross a variety of cultural roots
- There must be a value added component for the lives of potential visitors

- 2) Boys and Girls Club (Akron) – meeting goals** – to have an open dialogue with the organization caretakers to learn how the park can support their organization and community members. What should the park learn about the group and its members, what assets do they offer, and what are some of the challenges the community faces?

Community attendees: invitation went to individuals who use the boys and girls club. Twenty-one adults and 42 children were in attendance. Extra rangers were brought to provide programming for the kids.

Meeting Outcome/Specific Question(s) Asked:

What is important to you?

- Safety/Safety to home
- Clean environment/space
- Use of parks in their area/near home
- Security
- Tutor opportunities after school
- Focus on education instead of athletics

What issues are there with Cuyahoga Valley National Park?

- Transportation to the park
- What activities does the park have
- Where can I find the information
- Some of the things are too expensive (summer camps, etc)

What are the issues with community/parents/kids?

- Parents need to get involved and it's hard because many parents work
- Children are disrespectful
- Parents want to know who will be at the event and who will be supervising
- Community centers removed the pools
- Clothing is inappropriate

Parents asked "What about our teens?"

- We need events for our teens
- Teens need to set an example for the younger kids
- Potential internships for teens
- Area for fitness – yoga, lifting, be fit, basketball courts, swimming, etc.
- Have to get the teens to finish school
- Advocate other activities by combining health and fitness
- Guided tours

As the parents what would you like to do in Cuyahoga Valley National Park?

- Want to walk trails without their kids
- Connection with churches (picnics etc.)
- Bike on trail
- More events for kids
- Events in the north and west side versus the east
- Provide information via regular mail
- Put information in the libraries

Quotable quotes

- “You don’t know what you like unless you try it.” Unknown
- “We young people need to learn about parks and what they can do for you. It won’t be around for our kids if we don’t appreciate parks. A world without parks? Where would we be?” Alexis Jerels, 19, mother of a young toddler, West Akron
- “You don’t hear teens say “I’m going for a hike!” Dominic Woods, 17, East High School, Akron

- 3) Slavic Village (Cleveland) – meeting goals** - to have an open dialogue with the organization caretakers to learn how the park can support their organization and community members. What should the park learn about the group and its members, what assets do they offer, and what are some of the challenges the community faces?

Community attendees: residents were invited by the Slavic Village. There were eleven adults in attendance.

Meeting Outcome/Specific Question(s) Asked:

What do you like/value about parks?

- Enjoy birding
- Imagery
- Love the tow path
- The quiet
- We go to get away from the business of people

What do you feel is missing?

- Camping facilities – one resident stated “I feel like I have to go so far away to camp and I would like to be able to do it more often. And I would be able to if you offered it.”
- There are no signs, “half the time I’m not even aware that I’m in the park.”
- QR codes – consider putting them on buses or at bus stops. Provide simple data such as “if you take this bus you are only so far from the park or a water fall etc. “Or a simple park fact.
- Transportation to get our kids to the park

What are other ways you feel that we could connect the park to the neighborhood?

- Some type of transportation linkage
- 60% of our residents in Slavic Village do not own a car
- Can you add more stops with the train?
- You need to bring the park to the neighborhood – corner lots with plants from the park etc.
- You need to inform us “why the park is even here”
- We may not use it but at least we will KNOW that it is here and why
- People in these neighborhoods do not go much farther than a five block radius, groups are close knit and do not mingle
- Offer kids jobs (not merely menial labor)
- Target schools
- Consider modeling NASA in the Neighborhood

Proposed next steps:

- Want action
- Community project even if it is just planting trees on the tree lawns
- Butterfly gardens on vacant lots etc.
- Engage Lolly the Trolley for tours in the park
- Engage the Cleveland Public Library
- Target health and fitness
- Help people discover the hidden gems in their neighborhood, for example: the birthplace of Standard Oil

Comments:

- Specific word choices could be important; consider audio recording in the future
- There is great value in having one facilitator who knows something about the community, many times community institutions were mentioned in shorthand

- 4) Community Leader Breakfast (Cuyahoga Valley National Park) – meeting goals –** to inform the community leaders of the NPS Relevancy Campaign and list to feedback. Encourage open dialogue about community issues and finds ways to connect in a leadership/advisory capacity to build long term relationships.

Community attendees: Twelve community leaders from both Cleveland and Akron were in attendance for the breakfast.

Meeting Outcome/Specific Question(s) Asked:

What is important to your community?

- Consider Maslow's hierarchy of needs; people of today are focused on their needs
- You have to figure out how to get people to consider the park as part of their community
- Signage is a problem
- Materials need to contain more than information on flora and fauna the materials need to contain faces of the community
- Church is important in our communities; consider partnering in some fashion
- Health and fitness; neighborhoods are not safe to exercise in the park provides an option
- Lack of transportation

Where do you look for information; what locations would make sense for the park?

- ACME
- Libraries
- Churches
- Common places
- Also your park map is too much; things need to be simpler

How can the park serve your community?

- There needs to be more collaboration with groups
- The arrow head suggests western places
- Get up Get out and Go was a success because it was something the community wanted and needed --- can this be expanded in some manner or used as a template for something else

What We Learned

- We used very broad questions, but people wanted concrete topics
- It is important to offer an incentive to the people in the community that you are trying to engage
- Facilitators should be from the area you are attempting to connect with
- Prior “homework” on the community is essential – what is the demographic, who is the key individual in the home, etc.
- It is important to learn and understand how materials are best presented to the community (schools, churches, grocery stores, libraries – electronic is not always the way)
- Facility/venue choice is important
- We don’t want to waste time on what we already know (e.g. we have an identity issue).

Next Steps

- Consider spending time in an urban park observe how people “use” the space
- Remember not everyone uses parks the same way (consider how various ethnicities use space)
- Consider using park partners more they have more wiggle room in regards to promotion etc.
- Consider a multicultural event in the park
- The goal is for the park to host a number of events to further engage the communities. Events will take place both in the park as well as in the communities.
- Cleveland Clinic indicated desire to become park ambassadors and we are currently engaging in conversation with staff to develop methods of practice.
- A wonderful outcome of the Call to Action meeting with the Cleveland Clinic has resulted in a new program called Walked with a Doc. Monthly walks in the park will take place. The current agenda is for June, July, and August.
- The park is also collaborating with two communities and making arrangements to establish a regularly scheduled program through ‘Get Up Get Out and Go’.



Case Study Two

2011 Modern-Day Mather Hike Report

Cuyahoga Valley National Park

Submitted by Mary Pat Doorley

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Background

The National Park Service and the Conservancy of Cuyahoga Valley National Park invited Health and Wellness community leaders to Cuyahoga Valley National Park to participate in a Modern-Day Mather Hike which includes a facilitated discussion and an overnight experience in the national park. The Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park is a nonprofit organization created to engage public support for the park and provide services to enhance public use and enjoyment of the park. Through the Conservancy, the National Park Service was connected to the Center for Clinical and Community Health Improvement (CCCHI) of Austen BioInnovation Institute in Akron (ABIA). The Austen BioInnovation Institute in Akron (ABIA) – is a collaboration of Akron Children’s Hospital, Akron General Health System, Northeast Ohio Medical University (formerly Northeastern Ohio Universities Colleges of Medicine and Pharmacy), Summa Health System, The University of Akron and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation – is focused on patient-centered innovation and commercialization at the intersection of biomaterials and medicine.

The Stanford House is an historic farmhouse newly renovated by NPS maintenance staff managed by the Conservancy. There are nine bedrooms, a self-service kitchen with high-quality appliances, a comfortable community living room, a rustic dining room and a full breakfast prepared by Conservancy staff.

Description of Event

We hosted sixteen community health providers on Thursday, September 15, 2011 at Stanford House in Cuyahoga Valley National Park. We started the day at Stanford House so our guests could check-in. After check-in, we boarded a bus to the Virginia Kendall unit, considered one of the most scenic trail systems in Cuyahoga Valley National Park. The bus included an interpretive

tour by Park Ranger Brady Bourquin.

Once we arrived at Ledges Shelter in Virginia Kendall we met Park Ranger Margaret Adams.

Both rangers shared their personal experience with getting healthier using the park.

Participants had the option of hiking the moderate level Ledges Trail where one can experience dramatic rock cliffs, graceful hemlocks and cool water oozing from the cracks in the rocks with Park Ranger Brady Bourquin or an easy hike with Park Ranger Margaret Adams to the Ledges Overlook, which includes the beautiful view of the valley. Both options included an interpretive talk focusing on the creation of the unit/trail system and how the park was developed through community support. The entire group reconvened at the Ledges Overlook where Superintendent Austin discussed the Parks to the People movement of the 1970s and the creation of Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

After the hike we boarded the bus and went back to Stanford House and shared a dinner prepared by Executive Chef Larkin Rogers of the Conservancy. After dinner a facilitated discussion was led by Jennie Vasarhelyi, Chief of Interpretation, for the group. The following questions were discussed:

- What are your organizational goals that you think can be met by encouraging park visits?
- What would park visits need to look like? What services do we need to provide to help meet the goals?
- What can the healthcare community do to facilitate park visits for health reasons?

After the discussion most of the participants experienced a campfire with Park Ranger Brady Bourquin telling ghost stories about Stanford House and the local cemetery. The next morning we had breakfast and had a wrap-up discussion led by Dr. Cynthia Capers where we discussed the following:

- What were some of the themes that came up last night?
- What do we do to purpose some of these themes?

The program ended with several key concepts to further explore with the various partners.

Outstanding Issues

Parks offer an opportunity for free and safe exercise since neighborhoods are not always safe. However, there is an overall lack of safety perception by children and families in the park. Some participants feel safer in metro parks than in national parks. Minority communities are afraid of the national park because it is unknown and they do not see other minorities working or visiting the park. There is a need to have more of a relationship with the park to feel safe.

Project Ideas

General Ideas:

- Promote having family reunions in the park to the African American community
- American Heart Association will engage with providers to have them come to the park to help rate the hikes
- Connect with International Institute -Buddhist in Akron from Burma.
- Create a speakers bureau to attend community meetings
- Get Akron Metro into the park
- Buses decorated like CVNP
- Connect with Cardiac Rehab groups to walk trails and invite patients to come out
- Promote opportunity for families to play and exercise together
- Create Walk with a Doc series
- Create Walking Buddy Series
- Connect with online social program Gamesnake
- Connect with Minority Roundtable:
 - Creating walking program (make connection)
 - Want to connect to park's program Get Up, Get Out & Go!
 - Would like to be involved year round
- Connection with local foods:
 - Opportunity with school groups and meet with farmers. Where does food come from?
 - Education barriers:
 - When you see fresh vegetables not sure what it is and what do you do with it. Provide information at stand
 - Impact on local neighborhoods.
 - Poverty and fast food linked to health issues
- Healthier by Design: Healthy Care Community
 - Give them list of trails with the # of steps, grade. Provide more details than just easy, moderate, hard

Focus on Marketing/Promotion

- Embark on Health Campaign
 - Create statement for use in promotion of the park and grant applications.
 - Public Lands = Public Health or Healthy Parks Healthy People
 - This is your park to help you feel better
 - Potential giveaways like pedometer etc
 - Monthly enews
 - Add signs on trails with health-related tips or signal (this is good for your heart!)
 - Create testimonials
 - Tailor info to target audience
 - Connect with audiences
 - Target individuals with limited abilities for events
- Add health tips and statements of health benefits of CVNP
- Address safety in national parks
 - Promote this is a safe place!
 - Best time of day to hike
 - Dispel myths of dangerous animals and an unsafe environment.
- Provide a video of the trails to help new user understand what they look like
- Publications: need to address local users/and new audiences
 - Provide basic amenity info: where are the flushable toilets and running water
 - More details on trail specifics like mileage, grade, and better descriptors like “good for cardiac” or “wheelchair accessible” for example.
- Make drive through the park about of the park experience and adventure
- Obtain testimonials from users. How do they use them? Create an app to get the testimonials
 - Video – have at visitor centers to obtain testimonials

Develop linkages to community

- Access –Transportation to the park
- Create & develop community champions of the national park.
- Connect with a parish nurse program since they are the point person within the community for health screening.
- Connect with local networks: Minority Health Network and Wellness Council

Develop New Programs

- Create a family/community event in the park
- Promote : Rent a Ranger at reunions at the shelters
- Connect with families of the students using the park for cross country training/tournaments
- Host health organizational meetings in the park like the CCCHI Wellness Council or the Minority Health Roundtable
- Create hiking series for beginners other than the intense mileage Healthy Hikes series currently offered
- Minority Health Roundtable and Faith-Based
 - Offer hikes after service on Sunday
 - Ranger-led
 - More precise distance and description
 - House of the Lord – offers a community health clinic
- Connect with Conservancy's Trails Forever program
 - Focus on how trails are the heart of the park
 - Benefits of trail use
 - Need real time exposure
 - Other trails in the park other than towpath

Next steps

A park representative is now attending the monthly ABIA Wellness Council of Summit County.

The community health providers are committed to talking about the park in all of their individual organizations to be an advocate for health and wellness connected to the park. Some organization have arranged for NPS staff to speak at their organizational meetings about health and wellness.

The park is moving developing a strategy for improving publications.

Additional staffing is needed to meet the needs of providing basic orientation to the park.



Case Study Three

Case Study-Bridges Learning Center, Akron, Ohio

Cuyahoga Valley National Park

Submitted by Josh Bates

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On April 20, 2012 fifth grade students from Bridges Learning Center in Akron, Ohio came to Cuyahoga Valley National Park to assist staff in the removal of garlic mustard along the Towpath Trail. Although the drive to the park is a short ride from their school in Akron, these nine fifth graders were coming to a place that none of them had ever visited before. Their journey to the park began with a phone conversation in November 2011. Bridges Learning Center Program Specialist, Carrie Peterson, called me interested in doing a problem-based learning unit in the park and was curious with what we could offer. She was very upfront in telling me that her staff had never done a problem-based learning unit and that the students who attend Bridges all have some form of learning or behavioral issues. I believe Mrs. Peterson was very concerned that I would not want to work with her students and take on the additional burden of their issues. This group was not without their challenges, but that this has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my twelve year career!

Below I will outline the techniques that I utilize with groups interested in doing volunteer work or service learning projects at Cuyahoga Valley National Park. Some of what I do has been gained over many years of experience and some is just my philosophy what I think makes for a quality learning and volunteer experience.

- Everyone should have the opportunity to visit and experience CVNP. Our park offers multiple opportunities for visitation especially for students.
- Economics of a group should not preclude them from visiting. If there is a will there is a way!
- People of all backgrounds should have the same great experience. The economics of a group should not create a different experience for the participants.
- Students from all walks of life should experience the park.
- Students from all walks of life should have the opportunity to volunteer.
- I expect that everyone should have a great experience.
- Great customer service is the beginning of a great experience.
- Listen to the visitor or in this case the teacher. What do they want to accomplish.

- Make time to go to the school to meet with the teachers. Take park related materials. Share the park with them.
- Ask questions, what are the standards or the learning objectives. How can we the school need to the needs of the park.
- Bridges LC wanted to do a problem-based educational unit around plants communities. Invasive plants are abundant at CVNP and they are a great way to look at stresses in plant communities.
- Ensure safety to the teachers and parents as our top priority. I always tell any volunteer that their personal safety is our priority and our safety record reflects that.
- Ensure the groups that we have the tools and personal protective equipment for all participants.
- Water and bathrooms should be available.
- Logistics should be worked-out and shared with the group's leaders.
- Make time to do a site visit prior to the event. Discuss parking, bathrooms, and walk around the site.
- Treat everyone the same. Talk to young people like they are humans.
- Make multiple site visits to the school if necessary. I went to Bridges LC three times before they came to the park. The first time was for the students to get to know me and we did a program about animals in the park and I shared skins and skulls. The second was for them to ask questions and share information about invasive plants and garlic mustard. The third time was for the students to share their projects with me and their parents. My last interaction was when they came to the park to pull garlic mustard.
- Listen to the teachers. These men and women work with the students every single day. They are a wealth of knowledge!
- Find out as much about the group as possible. School mascot, what high school they feed into, how the school/grades are structured.
- Be flexible with the project. Sometimes accomplishing the volunteer task won't necessarily accomplish the group's goals.
- Be observant to the needs of the students. When I went to the school I noticed that one of the students really did not like the smell of garlic mustard. I asked the teacher and found out that he had Autism and a heightened sense of smell. When he came to the park I outfitted him with a dust mask and he did not have an issue with the smell anymore.
- Listen to the students. Let them share. Find out what they like and don't like.
- Have fun with the students and staff. Make learning fun and also the project.
- Volunteer work for students is hands-on and genuine experience.
- Make sure the students walk away with a sense of accomplishment.

- Continue to build trust. Become more than a person in uniform stating rules.
- Continue to build on safety when conducting a project. Offer advice, show how, reinforce.
- Encourage picnics while doing a project.
- Take time to enjoy the park beyond service. Look at turtles, birds, other plants.
- Listen and recognize barriers to enjoying the park and learning. Talk about wild animals, teach someone to recognize poison ivy, and fear of the unknown is normal.
- Constantly put yourself in others shoes. How would I feel about this park if I never knew it existed?
- Know the difference between bad behavior and excitement. Loud talk is sometimes another form of excitement or fear.
- Talk about why we are doing a project in real terms. Kids know when they are being sold a bill of goods.
- Kids can accomplish a lot of work.
- Kids need to feel a sense of accomplishment. Praise the constantly!
- Treat every student as though they may grow up to be a Park Ranger! We will never know how our work might affect someone's interests and future.
- Understand that this park or nature might not be for everyone. But they should have the chance to decide that fact for themselves!
- Care for these kids like you would your own.
- Always encourage students to be good and to do good things.



Case Study Four

Education Specialist

Cuyahoga Valley National Park

Submitted by Pamela Barnes

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Teacher-Ranger-Teacher (TRT) recruiting: although not a huge response, we started to work on a relationship with the Cleveland Area Educators Recruitment Association (CAMERA) and the National Alliance of Black School Educators (NABSE). This still will require a lot more work to build a relationship with them, and to understand their organization and how we can mutually benefit each other. Also just through continued recruiting through the Curriculum Directors of area school districts we have been able to get more variety of qualified applicants. Although the teachers themselves do not always reflect diversity, they are reaching an under-served audience of students. We intentionally chose two of the TRT's this year from high schools - one is a white male who works in a school in East Cleveland that is nearly 100% African American, and the other is an African American female who works in Akron Public Schools. I will be working this year with these teachers to come up with plans for a 'pathway to employment' to keep students engaged with the park and possibly have some of them apply to be teaching interns or seasonal rangers in the future.

Intern Recruiting (for Resident Program Field Instructors): Conservancy researched Historically Black Colleges with programs in Environmental Science, Biology, or Outdoor Recreation and sent targeted information to them. Next year we will be working with Cuyahoga Community College to recruit diverse applicants. The finding is that we are still not connecting with diverse students when they are close to graduation. The plan to work with Tri-C will enable us to connect with students earlier in their academic program and get them interested so they will apply when they finish a 4-year program.



Case Study Five

Grants and Outreach Report **Cuyahoga Valley National Park**

Cuyahoga Valley National Park has implemented a variety of grant funded programs with the purpose of creating a link between underserved audiences and their National Park. A common link that has been discovered is a need/want for safe, reliable recreation and food outlets. From these findings, programs like *Get Up, Get Out and Go!*, *First Bloom* and *Healthy Foods for Healthy Lifestyles* have been developed. Each of these programs works with communities in Cleveland and Akron to create the desired pathways.

Get Up, Get Out and Go!

This program was the start of large scale youth related outreach programs in CVNP. Starting in 2005, CVNP worked with the Akron Recreation Bureau, Akron Metropolitan School District and The Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park to develop a program for kids, designed by kids. After several months of working with a small group of 6th graders from now closed Riedinger Middle School in Akron, *Get Up, Get Out and Go!(GGG)* was born. GGG utilized the suggestions of the students to include snacks, play and evening events to which they would be transported on a regular basis during the summer months. In 7 years, GGG has grown to service over 300 children each summer in activities such as train rides, scavenger hunts, bike rides on the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath trail and camp-outs.

First Bloom

Through working with the National Park Foundation, The Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Giddings Elementary School in Cleveland, Positive Education Programs of Northeast Ohio and Friendly Inn Settlement House in Cleveland, CVNP has developed a series of native plant and butterfly gardens within the city of Cleveland and at the Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center. These groups worked within the *First Bloom* (FB) program to learn about the value of native plants in the health of the landscape as well as their benefit to the ecosystem as a whole. Students were engaged through their classroom and community center to design and install butterfly gardens in their neighborhoods and in the National Park.

Healthy Foods for Healthy Lifestyles

Through collaboration with the National Park Foundation, Charles Dickens @ Corlett School in Cleveland and Strengthening Our Students of Cleveland, CVNP has implemented a program geared toward helping students analyze their current and develop new eating and recreation habits. The program combines experiences in CVNP as well as completing food diaries, growing vegetables in their classroom and learning how to use those vegetables to create healthy dishes at home.

Case study information from other project sources:

Get Up, Get Out and Go!

During the 2005 - 06 school year, staff at Cuyahoga Valley National Park met with students, teachers and administrators of the Akron Public School district. Dr. Myron Floyd, professor of parks, recreation and tourism management at North Carolina State University worked on the development of this program and describes the methods that were used in the beginning. "We decided early on that engaging the community in activities the park had to offer would be crucial in developing this pilot program. We had local 6th and 7th graders actually create the tagline to promote the program: Get Up, Get Out and Go!. The students also helped us determine what types of activities would get them interested enough to head out to the park" (Barnhill, 2010) The outcome of these meetings was the development of a summer program for the kids, designed by the kids and offered by the NPS. Since its inception during the summer of 2006, the Get Up, Get Out and Go! (GGG) program has provided safe, dependable and recreational opportunities for over 4,000 Akron youth and their families. The success of this program can be greatly attributed to the community involvement during its creation. The students were asked to participate in a type of advisory board, choosing details about the programs ranging from time of day to frequency of events over the course of the summer season. Because there was buy in from the students, parents and teachers, GGG has been able to sustain growing numbers during its existence. (University, 2010)

Youth Engagement (Service Learning)

In the winter of 2010 Cuyahoga Valley National Park instituted a program to provide service learning projects and programs for school-aged youth from the Cleveland and Akron areas. High school students from 10 schools and youth service organizations participated in learning projects mainly focused on resource preservation and management. While the students were learning the ins and outs of how the NPS handles invasive species, trail and building maintenance and facility maintenance, they were also gaining a hands-on experience in each of these fields. Groups had the opportunity to develop their own plan of attack towards the problem at hand, the most popular of which was a look at the alarming rate of invasive species growth within the park. Students had the opportunity to work alongside NPS staff and volunteer workers to remove a great deal of autumn olive plants from an isolated area in the northern end of CVNP. (Bates, 2011)

Steps to success:

1. Include the partners and participants in the decision making process (when applicable)
2. Provide meaningful experiences for the participants that will allow them to make their own connections to the park and its resources.
3. Be consistent in the staff/volunteers that participate in the programs so that the participants may gain a trust and recognition of who they will be working with.